

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

Fall 2010

Review of *Uprising! Woody Crumbo's Indian Art* by Robert Perry

Robert B. Pickering

Gilcrease Museum

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), [Cultural History Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Pickering, Robert B., "Review of *Uprising! Woody Crumbo's Indian Art* by Robert Perry" (2010). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 2607.
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/2607>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Uprising! Woody Crumbo's Indian Art. By Robert Perry. Ada, OK: Chickasaw Press, 2009. 317 pp. Illustrations, notes. \$29.95.

In any discussion of important Indian artists of the twentieth century, Woody Crumbo (1912–1989) is a pivotal player. His dynamic figures, brilliant colors, and traditional themes were combined to create a new kind of art. He used traditional art forms and themes from his Potawatomi background as well as themes and incidents from other tribal traditions to inspire his work. Not satisfied with just creating art, Crumbo mentored other artists, and for much of his life he was personally involved in the business of art—creating new opportunities for himself and other Indian artists.

Robert Perry presents an easily readable if rather uncritical biography of Woody Crumbo by recounting stories and anecdotes about Crumbo's life and interactions with friends, mentors, and fellow artists. Although art is a continuous thread, the book is more about the man than the art. Perry recounts Crumbo's family's difficult move to Sapulpa, Indian Territory (Oklahoma), while he was still an infant. The family hoped to start a new and better life by taking advantage of tribal land allotments available to them. Through his early years, Woody spent much time on his own and away from school. Boarding school at the Chilocco Indian School, difficult as it was, provided him with an important mentoring relationship and the opportunity to begin developing his art. He also began to gain recognition for his work. During this time, he became acquainted with other Indian artists, such as Spencer Asah, James Auchiah, Jack Hokeah, Stephen Mopope, and Monroe Tsatoke, known as the Kiowa Five, who were emerging on the national art stage. Crumbo's vision of creating a life as a successful artist was crystallizing.

Perry follows Crumbo through his many geographical moves and his mercurial entrepreneurial ventures, including mining for uranium. The picture that emerges depicts a man of broad interests, great energy, and the willingness to abandon everything on a whim—to go in a different direction. Perry also relates anecdotes about Crumbo's spirituality which include traditional tribal themes as well as tea leaf reading. Perhaps the one constant in his life was his wife, Lillian. As a teacher in the Indian Service, she was always able to find a job and provide basic support for the family while Woody painted or pursued a new economic venture. Perry recounts many stories about Crumbo's attraction to treasure hunting and rumors of tales of riches. With the enthusiastic participation of friends, he used metal detectors and other means looking for ever elusive fortunes.

Although raising more questions about Crumbo than it answers, *Uprising! Woody Crumbo's Indian Art* is a good place to begin exploring the life and passions of this fascinating artist.

ROBERT B. PICKERING
Senior Curator
Gilcrease Museum